

## Homeless Persons

### 307.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that personnel understand the needs and rights of the homeless and to establish procedures to guide officers during all contacts with the homeless, whether consensual or for enforcement purposes. The Alsip Police Department recognizes that members of the homeless community are often in need of special protection and services. It is the goal of the Alsip Police Department to address these needs in balance with the overall mission of this department. Therefore, officers will consider the following when serving the homeless community.

#### 307.1.1 POLICY

It is the policy of the Alsip Police Department to provide law enforcement services and to protect the rights, dignity and private property of all members of the community, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Homelessness is not a crime and members of this department will not use homelessness solely as a basis for detention or law enforcement action.

### 307.2 FIELD CONTACTS

Officers are encouraged to contact the homeless for purposes of rendering aid, support and for community-oriented policing purposes. When encountering a homeless person who has committed a non-violent misdemeanor and continued freedom is not likely to result in a continuation of the offense or a breach of the peace officers may consider long-term solutions to problems that may relate to the homeless, such as shelter referrals and counseling in lieu of physical arrest. However, nothing in this policy is meant to dissuade an officer from taking reasonable enforcement action when facts support a reasonable suspicion of criminal activity.

Officers should provide homeless persons with resource and assistance information whenever it is reasonably apparent such services may be appropriate.

#### 307.2.1 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Homeless members of the community will receive the same level and quality of service provided to other members of the community. The fact that a victim or witness is homeless can, however, require special considerations for a successful investigation and prosecution. Officers should consider the following when handling investigations involving homeless victims, witnesses or suspects:

- (a) Document alternate contact information. This may include obtaining addresses and phone numbers of relatives and friends.
- (b) Document places the homeless person may frequent.
- (c) Provide homeless victims with victim/witness resources when appropriate.
- (d) Obtain statements from all available witnesses in the event a homeless victim is unavailable for a court appearance.

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- (e) Consider whether the person may be a dependent adult or elder and if so proceed in accordance with the Adult Abuse Policy.
- (f) Arrange for transportation for investigation related matters, such as medical exams and court appearances.
- (g) Consider whether a crime should be reported and submitted for prosecution even when a homeless victim indicates he/she does not desire prosecution.

### **307.3 MENTAL ILLNESS AND MENTAL IMPAIRMENT**

Some homeless persons may suffer from a mental illness or a mental impairment. Officers shall not detain a homeless person under a mental illness commitment unless facts and circumstances warrant such a detention (see the Civil Commitments Policy).

When a mental illness hold is not warranted, the contacting officer should provide the homeless person with contact information for mental health assistance as appropriate. In these circumstances, officers may provide transportation to a mental health specialist if requested by the person and approved by a supervisor.

### **307.4 ECOLOGICAL ISSUES**

Sometimes homeless encampments can impact the ecology and natural resources of the community and may involve criminal offenses beyond mere littering. Officers are encouraged to notify other appropriate agencies or departments when a significant impact to our environment has or is likely to occur. Significant impacts to the environment may warrant a crime report, investigation, supporting photographs and supervisor notification.